NOTES ON WESTERN AGRICULTURE.

Editorial Correspondence of The N. Y. Tribune.

CHICAGO, Jan. 1, 1859.

The Agriculture of the North-West, especially that which looks to this city as its immediate market, is so important an element of the National Industry and Wealth, that some notes upon it, derived from personal observation and extensive inquiry, may prove of general interest. *The Chicago Press and Tribune* of this morning has a full, elaborate review of the Trade of this port, from which I extract the Exports of Chicago and other ports on Lake Michigan, as follows:

Shipments of all kinds of Grain from Chicago for the past four years.

	1855.	1856.	1857.	1858.
Wheat, bu	6,298,155	8,337,420	9,485,052	8,727,832
Corn	7,517,625	11,129,661	6,814,615	7,493,212
Oats	1,888,538	1,014,547	416,778	1,498,134
Rye	19,318	509	....	7,569
Barley	92,032	19,051	17,993	127,168
Total	15,806,718	20,501,236	16,734,436	17,853,761
Flour into Wheat	817,095	1,081,945	1,298,240	2,181,405
Total	16,633,813	21,583,221	18,032,678	20,035,166

Total Exports of Flour and Grain from Lake Michigan Ports, 1858.

From	Wh't & Fl'r. bush.	Corn bush.	Oats bush.	Barley & oth'r Gr. bush.	Total. bush.
Chicago	10,909,243	7,493,212	1,498,134	134,577	20,035,166
Milwaukee	5,239,461	33,177	615,283	45,436	6,007,357
Racine	924,356	9,686	59,426	51,378	1,044,856
Kenosha & other p'ts (est.)	600,000	.....	75,000	50,000	725,000
Total	17,717,100	7,536,075	2,277,843	281,391	27,812,389

The export of Animal Products from Chicago during the last year sums up as follows:

Value of Beef packed here in 1858	$1,277,596
Hogs packed from Nov. 1 to Dec. 28	155,641
Hogs killed here during the year	270,861
Do. shipped alive	145,551
Beef Cattle received in 1858	118,551
Do. shipped	43,149
Butter received and shipped, lb	3,076,921
Wool shipped, lb	594,610
Highwines shipped, bbls	94,590
Hides, lb	10,850,943
Grass Seed, lb	4,344,946

The returns from which the above are compiled are necessarily imperfect—Wool, for example, showing a receipt of 971,500 lb with an export of but 594,610 as above. Very much stock is driven in and sold in such manner as not to be taken into the account, as much produce comes in by wagon and is sold and consumed without being recorded. Consider that Chicago is but of yesterday—that the boy who used in 1830 to bring her weekly Eastern mail from Niles, Michigan, (90 miles) on an Indian pony, crossing the Calumet on a tree felled for a foot-bridge, camping in the woods, and passing but a single Post-Office (Laporte) on the way, is not yet an old man, and that not one-tenth of the soil, which must ultimately contribute to the Exports of Chicago, has yet been broken up, and we have some glimpse of the ultimate importance of the Agriculture of the North-West.

Not that the export of Grain or Flour from this region is to keep pace with the growth of the country—far from it. To-day, the production of Grain for export is the most precarious and worst paid direction which the farmer of Illinois or Iowa can give to his labor. The same amount of effort devoted to the production of Horses, Cattle, Hogs or Sheep, will pay him twice as well. But the poor cannot await slow returns, and the labor invested in sowing Spring Wheat or planting Corn can be turned into cash in the course of six months, while the stock-grower must wait three or four years for his reward; so Grain will be grown and shipped, at least until the farmers of the North-West shall be less generally harassed by debt. By-and-by, shoemakers, tailors, hatters, spinners, weavers, &c., will be drawn hither by cheap food and ready markets for their wares at fair prices; but so long as Clothing, Shoes and Hats can be bought in Eastern cities on credit, while the makers, if living here, would have to be paid down for them, I apprehend that this beneficent movement of manufacturers and mechanics from the East to the West will be much slower than the general good requires. Meantime, the West must export Grain, though every bushel of it takes from her rich soil elements which she does not replace and will ultimately miss, and though for every dollar's worth thus exported a double amount, under a rude and vicious system of cultivation, is washed out by rains and floods, and carried down stream to be lost in the Lakes or the Gulf.

I do not believe Wheat-growing a profitable pursuit in this region. That the labor devoted to the last crop has not been half paid, is well understood; but it does not seem to be so well remembered that the poor harvest of 1858 does by no means stand alone. In fact, it had already been given up that Winter Wheat could not be relied on as a staple crop in Illinois or Iowa—that there is too little snow in Winter, or too much wind, or too much ice, or too many sudden and violent changes of temperature, or too many destructive insects, to allow it a fair chance. The Spring Wheat of this region is an inferior article, at best; and now this has failed also. I think it will not be sown half so extensively next Spring as it was last Spring—and the ground thus yielded will not be recovered. Chicago will export less Wheat and Flour in '59 than she did in '58, and, though her aggregate export of these staples may be greater ten years hence than it now is, it will bear a far smaller proportion to her entire export trade than it has done. The growing of Wheat will move gradually northward—to northern Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, where the snow lies through most of the Winter and protects the young plants from fierce winds and bitter frosts. Illinois will not for many years grow so many bushels of Wheat to each cultivated acre of her soil as she has done.

With Indian Corn, the case is different. From the answers to pretty general inquiries I conclude that an Illinois farmer who understands his business can usually sack four bushels of shelled corn for every day's work of man or team required in its production—in other words, can earn a dollar per day in growing corn and selling it at his barn at twenty-five cents per bushel. Some do better than this; others much worse; but growing corn here at twenty-five cents per bushel is a fair business to those who understand it; while the farmer who knows how and when to sell, and is not obliged to hurry his crop into market prematurely, can average a higher price than that, after adding the cost of taking it to market. There are portions of the State in which it may not average so much; but even here the crop may be fed in the field on the ear to Swine or Cattle so as to pay at least the above price. I believe, therefore, that the production of corn in Illinois and Iowa is destined to increase largely and rapidly, and that the production of Pork from it at anything like present prices is a sure road to wealth. Cattle grown on prairie grass and corn-stalks at very small cost and well fattened on corn before selling also pay well; Horses better; Sheep, where well housed at night and carefully tended, best of all. There ought to be millions more of Sheep in this State, especially of those breeds which yield choice Mutton—and in due time there will be. With a range including dry timbered openings and rolling prairie, and a dry shelter in which to be folded at night, I believe any well-managed flock will yield at least twenty-five per cent of net profit per annum.

"Sweet are the uses of adversity!" Thousands of Illinois farmers who were quite sure that *their* lands did not need draining, have somewhat modified their tone since their sore experience of the floods of 1858. At first, of course, they will content themselves with a few open slough ditches, which carry off a little of the water and a good deal of what is best in the soil; but even these, vicious and clumsy as they are, are decidedly better than nothing. Drain-tile manufactories have been established at Chicago and Joliet, and every tile properly put down in 1859 will create a demand for at least four more in 1860. But thorough drainage with tile is slow and expensive, so that it cannot be expected to extend far beyond the shadows of steeples where land is so cheap and abundant as in Illinois. I rejoice, therefore, to hear that the fashion of draining, *without tile*, which I poorly described in an account of my visit to Maj. Dickinson's farm last September, is making headway here. I heard at Aurora of this plan of drain-making—by simply perforating the earth at a depth of three to five feet, and leaving there a sort of muskrat-hole so gauged that the water which filters into it will find a uniform descent from the upper side of the field to an outlet at the lower. Of course, this is impracticable on stony and would not last on sandy soils; but on any clayey loam or hard-pan, such as is generally found on the prairies, where the lay of the land is at all inclined or rolling, it will work well; and drains thus made at a depth of four feet, may be plowed over and over without materially damaging them. If they last even ten years, the owners of the land will be ready to tile when it they give way.

I believe too little account has yet been made here of large open drains by way of fencing. That the heavy frosts of Winter will impair such fence is very true; but then the material is always on hand, and repairs cannot be difficult. If the Steam Plow shall ever become a realized fact—and there are not less than a thousand persons to-day at work on it, each confident that *his* Plow is destined to eclipse all the rest and bring him fame and fortune—it will soon be girdling each field with an open fence-drain three or four feet deep, whose banks will be so sloped and grassed as to defy the attacks of frost. A slight hedge on one bank will render these fences cattle-and-hog-proof, and then a few good underdrains discharging into them from the lowest depressions of the adjacent fields will clear the land of "sloughs" and provide the farm with water. I hear quite generally that wherever a tolerable commencement of thorough draining has been made, the dreaded and damaging want of water, so generally felt on the more level prairies, is felt no longer. Half a dozen deep drains of even forty rods each will secure to almost any farm a copious supply of water, far better for any animal than that found on the surface, tasting of its decaying vegetation.

And, speaking of fences, I hear with pleasure that the Osage Orange is justifying the hopes of its advocates, and conquering the skepticism which has found frequent utterance through THE TRIBUNE. The recent hard Winters, while cutting it down at the top, have thickened it at the bottom, so that almost every fence five years old, that has been decently cared for, is now in excellent condition. And then, animals find it among the few things with regard to which familiarity does *not* breed contempt—they learn to dread and shun its poisonous thorns—so that no hog of average gumption likes to run his snout into this row of slender bushes for a third time. I cannot be mistaken in my conclusion that the Osage Orange is growing rapidly in favor even in Northern Illinois. Further South, its utility has hardly been questioned.

As to Timber, the uniform testimony is that it is on the increase—that many more acres of Illinois are now covered with it than in 1840, or at any former period within the knowledge of civilized man. As the annual fires are restricted within narrower and yet narrower limits, the woods encroach upon the prairies, so that, though there may be no more tuns of live timber in the State to-day than formerly, there are very many more trees and a much larger annual increase by growth.

Yet, too few of the settlers on the prairies surround their habitations with young trees, and the consequence is a look of bareness and bleakness about these prairie homes, especially in Winter, which an Eastern man cannot be expected to note without a shiver. It is sheer nonsense to say that trees will not grow on the prairies, when so many are seen growing there in thousands of different places. That they are started with difficulty is doubtless true; and that there may be kinds that will not live at all, is quite possible, though I do not think it yet proved. I do not pretend to know which is the Evergreen best adapted to brave the prairie gales and breezes; but I am very sure there must be one, if no more, Divinely intended for this very end, and it cannot be too soon designated and multiplied. An average prairie quarter-section farm, surrounded by a belt or screen of thrifty Evergreens of almost any species, would sell for almost any price that the owner could in conscience ask. I believe the time must come when the great prairies will be intersected, gridironed, checkered, with belts and groves of planted timber, partly evergreen, sensibly modifying their climate and diminishing the fierceness of their winds; and that thereby they will be rendered capable of producing many of the Fruits to which they are now inhospitable.

That the Peach will not flourish in Northern Illinois seems for the present to be conceded; and I grieve to say that the production of the Apple has not of late been successful. There are good farmers who have set out hundreds of choice trees, and taken good care of them, yet have not at this day a tenth of them alive. It seems to be admitted that the Rhode Island Greening and many other choice varieties cannot be produced in Northern Illinois; it is not so well settled that the hardier sorts can be. Good apples are selling here at about the same price per bushel as they bring per barrel in New-York, and nearly all that are used in this City came from the East—many of them from beyond Buffalo. It is believed that those raised from the seed here will do better—as I certainly trust they will—and I cling to the hope that timber-planting is destined to modify the influences which now render the planting of most fruit trees a desperate experiment. To live on Hog and Homminy, with good Apples at $3 a bushel, is not an inviting prospect, and this diet is no more wholesome than palatable.

If some of those who have bought naked prairie and still hold it on speculation would resolve to plant it with timber, I should be tempted to modify or forego in their behalf my chronic dislike to land speculators. Let the owner or owners of three or four adjacent sections in the middle of Grand Prairie, or some other wide expanse of treeless soil, resolve to break up, next Fall, four contiguous quarter-sections, sowing acorns, hickory-nuts, chestnuts, butternuts, black walnuts, with the seeds of the Pine, Black Locust, the Peach, the Apple, &c., &c., in every third or fourth furrow; let them plow a belt around this plantation the ensuing Fall, so as to keep the prairie-fires at a respectful distance—sowing this belt with Winter Wheat or Rye, and plowing and sowing it again the following year, having plowed a deep ditch on the outside of it so as to keep off hogs and cattle, and placed a good man in charge to keep this fence good—and I am sure the enterprise cannot fail to prove not merely beneficent but profitable. In a very few years, the Locust may be cut out for fencing and fuel, when it will grow again twice as rapidly as at first; and soon each twenty acres of this young forest would render a quarter-section of the adjacent prairie habitable and valuable. I doubt whether there is a surer investment for surplus capital in the East or the West than in this sort of tree-planting. H. G.

EN ROUTE TO THE NEBRASKA GOLD MINES.

Correspondence of The N. Y. Tribune.

OMAHA, N. T., Dec. 27, 1858.

Ten teams arrived in Council Bluffs last week to Winter, en route to the Nebraska Gold Mines, and the company report sixty other teams on their way, from the circle of their acquaintance alone in Wisconsin. Their plan is a good one, as they can Winter at as little expense in Western Iowa or Nebraska as in Wisconsin, Illinois or Ohio, and be so much nearer the mines in the Spring. Corn and potatoes, in almost any quantities, can be had here at 25 cents per bushel, and pork can be bought in our streets at from $4 to $5 per hundred, and other things in proportion. The whole country here is alive with the Gold Excitement, and there will be a general exodus early in the Spring. Some will even start in February, unless the weather should be very severe. Small samples of Nebraska gold can be seen at many places of business in our town, brought back by some of our own citizens, who went to the mines to see for themselves, and are so well satisfied of their richness that they have returned for their families, and will be among the first who will leave here for the mines again. SAMETRO.

MARINE AFFAIRS.

THE UNITED STATES NAVY AS IT IS.

If the annual naval Register published by the authorities at Washington could be relied on as a correct representative of the United States Navy, there would be little necessity for this article; because several of our contemporaries, "in order to furnish their readers with "information touching this particular branch of the United States service, as full and complete as possible," have actually copied into their editorial columns every item in the book referred to. But it so happens that a New-York City Directory for 1849, could not possibly be a more incorrect guide to New-York in 1859, than the last number of the Register (dated 1858, but printed in the latter part of '57) is to our Navy at the present day. Accordingly we proceed to lay before the readers of THE TRIBUNE an accurate estimate of our naval forces, their distribution at home and abroad, and their actual (not reputed) strength.

LINE-OF-BATTLE-SHIPS.

We have seven ships of the line afloat, not one of which will ever be out of sight of land again, unless it be razeed into a frigate, or sloop-of-war. The largest of these, and indeed, one of the largest vessels of her kind in the world, is the magnificent "liner" Pennsylvania, at present the permanent receiving-ship at Norfolk. Although she cost the country nearly a million of money, and is over twenty years of age, she was never at sea; indeed, the only occasion on which she ever passed a harbor light, was when she sailed from Philadelphia to her present location. She is past all service now. There are not as many sound planks in her huge hull as would make a good fishing-smack. The "New-York," a nominal eighty-four, has been on the stocks at Norfolk nearly half a century, monopolizing an immense ship-house, becoming moldy, loose and rotten on the frame. With the exception of a brief correspondence originated by each new Secretary when he takes the helm at the Navy Department, nothing is ever heard or said about the large amount of public money invested in her, the splendid man-of-war, of any size or rank, she might be made, or the valuable space she occupies. The "New-Orleans," another ship-of-the-line, has been over twenty years on the stocks at Sackett's Harbor, and is now as far from being finished, or converted into anything useful, as she ever was. The Alabama, the third of the line-of-battle grade, has been "thrice ten years and one beside," in a similar predicament at Portsmouth, N. H.; and the "Virginia," No. 4, of the same grade, has been twenty-five years on the stocks at Boston. A person not well-informed respecting naval matters, would think, on reading the Register above referred to, that, doubtless, each of these ships was lying in the stream, off some of the Navy Yards, awaiting orders to prepare for service. Even one of our editorial neighbors, in a late article expatiating on our national resources, stated confidently that "we have also ten ships-of-the-line, which could be "made ready for sea duty in a few weeks, if necessity required it." In point of fact, it would take more time and money to complete any one of the vessels named, than to build and equip three steamers of thirty guns each, making large allowance for machinery.

(The Columbus, the Ohio, the North-Carolina, the Delaware, and the Vermont, are all past doing any good, and, if they were immediately taken in hands the wherewithal to build a new and splendid steamer could be made out of each of them.) Thus out of the ten line-of-battle ships set down as belonging to the Navy, four have been on the stocks at an average over 30 years, and the other six are in every particular worthless for sea duty.

THE FRIGATES.

We have fourteen sailing frigates, of which at least four might be converted into servicable sloops-of-war, but which will never be any use as frigates again. The experiment so successfully tried on the Savannah and the Jamestown, could hardly prove otherwise than beneficial if applied to the Potomac, the Columbia, the Raritan, and the Brandywine. The St. Lawrence, the Congress, the Sabine, the Cumberland, and probably the Constitution might be rendered good enough without razeeing for a few years; and considering that we still employ sailing frigates as flagships where the slave traffic predominates, any one of the above would be admirably calculated for the coasts of Africa and Brazil. Indeed, the Sabine has already gone to the latter place, and we hear that the Congress will go to Africa. The Santee is a new ship that never did any service at home or abroad; the United States and the Constitution are the two oldest vessels in the Navy, having been built in the year 1797. Out of fourteen frigates, therefore, at their present caliber, only six are capable of being made worth anything, and it would cost as much to fit out even these as to complete the same number of new steam gun-boats, from keel to stovepipe.

THE SLOOPS-OF-WAR.

Our sailing sloops-of-war count twenty, and are by far the most useful, valuable, and efficient vessels in the service. Fifteen of them are in commission, and only five idle. The Constellation is the best of all, and her fine proportions and splendid equipments gained for her a few years ago the universal commendation of the British naval authorities. Her armament is heavier than that of many frigates, and her strength and solidity are unequaled. The Macedonian, Jamestown, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Germantown, Cyane and St. Louis, are also good for several years' duty, but the remaining twelve will soon have done their service. Of the sloops-of-war only ten may be said to be available for all kinds of service.

We have three brigs—the Bainbridge, Perry and Dolphin—and one schooner, which are in commission. They are valuable as tenders, coasters, &c.

THE STEAMERS.

Steamers were almost unknown in the navy until very recently. The oldest at present on the list is the little third class side-wheel Fulton, Admiral Shubrick's flag-ship in South America, and she is twenty years of age. Even up to 1850, there were only eleven vessels belonging to the service, propelled by steam; but since that year sixteen additional ones have been launched, and twelve more will be afloat ere 1859 goes by. An English periodical, in a lengthened article on the Royal Navy, recently asserted that there never was built in the United States a naval propeller that answered the expectations of its builders and the Government. A cotemporary of ours contradicted the statement in toto, which proves how little some journalists know of such matters. The truth is, there never was built for our Government a vessel that came up to even half the anticipations of the people or of the Navy Department; but we should remember that very few vessels, Government or mercantile, prove as valuable as is expected. The Niagara, for instance, is altogether a fine vessel; but her machinery is not so perfect, her internal arrangements are not so judicious, her general speed is not near so great, and the *ensemble* of the ship is not so prepossessing to critical eyes, as we were told they would be. Of the Wabash, the Merrimack, the Minnesota, the Roanoke, and the Colorado, the same thing may be said, and is said, by all who know anything about men-of-war. The new steam-sloops just launched promise to come nearer to what was expected than any other vessels; but even these owe much of their popularity and the satisfaction with which they are received by naval people, to the modified anticipations which the comparative failure of the larger steamers to come up to the exaggerated standard marked out for them, could not but render universal. The Brooklyn, lately turned over to the authorities, is certainly a first-rate vessel in many particulars, and, with the other new ones of her class, will doubtless prove a most efficient and useful man-of-war. The following is a correct list of all our steamers, placed according to their efficiency and qualifications for service:

Niagara,	Minnesota,	Brooklyn,	Hartford,
Merrimack,	Roanoke,	Lancaster,	Pensacola,
Wabash,	Colorado,	Richmond,	San Jacinto,
Saranac,	Mississippi,	Susquehanna,	Powhatan,
	Fulton, and Water Witch.		

It will be seen from the above—which only includes vessels that could be immediately put upon duty—that we have some 18 steamers, equal, and probably superior to a like number picked out of any other service. There are also attached to the Navy some three or four tenders, &c., not worth mentioning. Annexed is a recapitulation of our naval strength as it is, as contra-distinguished from what it is represented to be by the Register:

According to the Register.		*Really Available.*	
Ships-of-the-line	10	Ships-of-the-line	Not one.
Frigates	14	Frigates	3
Sloops-of-war	21	Sloops-of-war	18
Brigs	3	Brigs and Schooners	4
Schooners	1	Steamers	10
Steamers	27	Storeships	5
Storeships	5		
Total	80	Total	45

The different yards have contributed as follows to the erection of vessels, including those being built: 10 were built in New-York, 15 in Philadelphia, 8 in Washington, 15 in Norfolk, 17 in Boston, 7 in Portsmouth, N. H., 1 in Erie, Pa., 1 in Pittsburgh, 1 transferred from the War Department, and 8 were purchases. These statistics include all the new steam sloops-of-war in process of construction except the two at Pensacola.

WHERE THE OFFICERS COME FROM.

Before enumerating the number of officers of each grade, let us do what we have never yet seen done, namely, shew the share each State has in supplying candidates for naval epaulets. First, then, in point of numbers is Virginia, which has furnished no less than 230 captains, commanders, lieutenants, &c. The other States are less numerously represented, as will be seen from the following statement:

Virginia	230	New-Hampshire	34	Ohio	28
New-York	210	Connecticut	40	Indiana	12
Pennsylvania	176	Louisiana	16	Wisconsin	4
Maryland	125	Kentucky	32	Arkansas	4
Massachusetts	85	Alabama	15	Irish	20
New-Jersey	55	Michigan	5	English	4
South Carolina	40	Missouri	4	West Indians	4
Vermont	16	Georgia	26	Greeks	4
Illinois	8	Tennessee	14	Welsh	2
Florida	8	Delaware	18	Scotch	2
District Columbia	35	North Carolina	45	Belgians	2
Rhode Island	19	Maine	44	French	2

Of these 94 are captains, 132 commanders, 382 lieutenants, 150 medical officers, 66 pursers, 24 chaplains, 12 Professors of Mathematics, 24 masters, 209 passed midshipmen and midshipmen all told, 38 boatswains, 40 gunners, 48 carpenters, 39 sailmakers, 96 engineers, 70 marine officers, and 20 of minor ranks, beside several navy agents, storekeepers, &c.

The recent promotions and exchanges are here calculated, but the persons who have obtained midshipmen's warrants since January, 1858, are not, in consequence of their not yet being turned over for duty to the Navy.

DISPOSITION OF OUR NATIONAL VESSELS.

Every succeeding year brings forth some new necessity, actual or imaginary, calling for an increase of our naval forces abroad. The advent of 1858 was no exception to this rule, nor is 1859 likely to be. Beside adding a vessel or two to nearly all our squadrons abroad within the last twelve months, we have had to provide a ship for the Atlantic Cable expedition, another for the conveyance of negroes to Africa, several for the Paraguay Expedition, and now every yard in the Union is doing its mite toward equipping an expedition to the Gulf of Mexico. First, let us review the Paraguay fleet, as being the largest and most important squadron ever concentrated under the American flag. It consists of the following vessels, Admiral W. B. Shubrick Commander-in-Chief:

THE PARAGUAY EXPEDITION.

Vessels.	Officers.	Men.	Guns.
Frigate Sabine	45	600	50
Frigate St. Lawrence	40	500	50
Sloop-of-war Falmouth	20	250	20
Sloop-of-war Preble	30	150	16
Brig-of-war Perry	10	80	6
Brig-of-war Bainbridge	10	100	10
Brig-of-war Dolphin	10	80	6
Steamer-of-war Fulton	12	100	5
Steamer-of-war Water-Witch	10	140	4
Steamer Harriet Lane	10	80	2
Steamer Memphis	10	60	2
Steamer Atlanta	10	60	2
Steamer Caledonia	10	60	2
Steamer Westernport	10	60	2
Steamer Southern Star	10	60	2
Steamer Metacomet	5	30	1
Steamer M. W. Chapin	5	30	1
Storeship Supply	15	50	1
Storeship Release	15	50	1

Every one of the above has left for Buenos Ayres except the chartered steamer Metacomet, which was to sail from Pensacola on the 6th inst. The six propellers chartered by the Navy Department to coöperate with our national vessels in carrying out the object of this expedition, will cost the country about $12,000 a month while they may be wanted, but as they have been engaged for six months, the sum of $60,000 must be paid for their services, were they only needed for as many weeks. Although the Government was to receive these steamers at the navy yards in a seaworthy condition, thousands of dollars from the national purse were required to fit them for service. Several officers of distinction have publicly expressed the opinion that, but for the peculiar circumstances of the case, every officer ordered to these vessels, who could afford it, would resign his commission sooner than go to sea in them. Indeed, some of the minor officials appointed to one or two of Cromwell's steamers, gave up their situations, "rather than risk their lives in such coal barges," as they expressed it. Yet the Secretary of the Navy, in his annual report, has recommended Congress to purchase all the chartered propellers, at a cost of $2,441,000. To show that Mr. Toucey was not altogether ignorant of the worthlessness of said propellers at the time he submitted his suggestion, we quote a paragraph from a private letter written by one of the oldest and most honored commodores in the service to a naval officer on the New-York station.

"My opinion is, that the money paid for the vessels you name, will, if the Government purchase them, be simply thrown away. They could only serve us as domestic coasters in fine weather; but we have more than enough of small steamers for that purpose. I am well aware that, in times of peace, Cromwell's propellers would be just the thing we require in South America, China, or up the Straits, if there were no ocean between us and those places; but as ships or steamers cannot cross the sea without being liable to meet squalls and bad weather, and as the craft referred to are not fit, and indeed never were intended to be sea boats, why should we buy them! * * * But do not be foolish enough to write your ideas to the Department, as you have written them to me. Mr. Toucey knows, as well as you and I do, the real value of the steamers. Take this for granted."

THE GULF SQUADRON.

It having been decided by the authorities, in view of recent developments, to reënforce our ships on the home station, so that, in case of emergency, they might be able to concentrate in the Gulf of Mexico, the following vessels will be located there about the 1st of March. We give their detailed strength:

Vessels.	Officers.	Men.	Guns.
Steam-frigate Roanoke	55	400	40
Sailing sloop-of-war Savannah	16	200	22
Sailing sloop-of-war Jamestown	18	225	22
Sailing sloop-of-war Saratoga	14	160	20
Sailing sloop-of-war St. Louis	16	250	20
Steam sloop-of-war Hartford	24	200	18
Steam sloop-of-war Brooklyn	24	300	18
New steam sloop	14	100	6
Storeship Relief	7	60	1
Total	168	1,995	169

Rumor says that several other steamers will be fitted for this fleet, but we put down only what are understood to be already ordered. At the present time the crews of two of the above sloops-of-war, the Savannah and the Jamestown, would be very indifferently qualified to perform any duty of a hostile nature, as they are but just recovering from a dangerous and protracted fever, that carried away some of their numbers. The Roanoke is flag-ship, and has on board the ship's company of the steam-frigate Colorado, which she relieved a few months ago. The Savannah, as already stated, was lately razeed from a frigate, and may be considered as good as new. The Jamestown is also an ex-frigate, and second to no craft of her class. The Saratoga is a small vessel, not good for much, but all the rest, except the store-ship Relief and the St. Louis, are new, and have never been to sea.

THE PACIFIC SQUADRON,

of which Commodore John C. Long is Commander-in-Chief, consists of two steam-frigates, one first-class and one second-class; and four sailing sloops-of-war, beside a couple of stationary craft, lying at anchor in two or three of the principal harbors on the station. The strength of this squadron is as follows:

Vessels.	Officers.	Men.	Guns.
Steam-frigate Merimac	38	428	40
Steam-frigate Saranac	22	290	6
Sloop-of-war St. Mary's	18	230	20
Sloop-of-war Vandalia	18	225	20
Sloop-of-war Decatur	12	196	16
Sloop-of-war Cyane*	15	240	20
Total	128	1,621	122

*The Cyane touched at Rio last month en route to Valparaiso.

A new ship's company was lately sent out to relieve that at present on board the St. Mary's, but on its arrival at Panama there was no American man-of-war there, and the officers and men must remain in *statu quo* until their future vessel learns of their whereabouts.

THE AFRICAN SQUADRON.

The coast of Africa is considered a good place to send frigates and sloops-of-war not remarkable for speed or efficiency, because, only a small portion of it being visited by American merchantmen, the duty of a man-of-war is merely to show the Yankee flag occasionally at different ports, and sometimes to overhaul vessels that look like slavers. Although this last-named employment is nominally the chief end of our war ships on the African coast, there has for years back existed between Commanders-in-Chief and Navy Secretaries, a private understanding that it is in reality a secondary affair. So evident, indeed, does this "understanding" appear to all naval people, that every officer, and, indeed, almost every intelligent man in the service, can foretel what new Commander-in-Chief will go to "Porto Praya" six months before an old one is relieved. There are only seven eligible for that important post, of all our present captains. Commodore Thomas E. Conover is, at present, Commander-in-Chief. The following ships are now on the coast:

Vessels.	Officers.	Men.	Guns.
Frigate Cumberland (flag ship)	30	420	50
Sloop-of-war Vincennes	18	220	20
Sloop-of-war Dale	10	150	16
Sloop-of-war Marion	16	190	16
Total	74	980	102

THE MEDITERRANEAN SQUADRON.

Elie A. F. Lavallette, Commander-in-Chief. Formerly the Mediterranean station used to be the rendezvous for all our crack ships, and as many as could be spared from other squadrons were sure to be sent there. But now we have only two ships representing our navy in that part of the world:

Vessels.	Officers.	Men.	Guns.
Wabash	35	460	40
Sloop-of-war Macedonian	20	260	22
Total	55	720	62

At last advices the officers and men were well. The Wabash was at Genoa, and the Macedonian at sea, cruising.

EAST INDIES AND CHINA SQUADRON.

Commodore Josiah Tattnall is Commander-in-Chief. Three of the most useful steam frigates in the navy and one sloop-of-war compose this squadron, and although two of them have done several years' service, they are at present inferior to none. We give their strength:

Vessels.	Officers.	Men.	Guns.
Steam frigate Minnesota	35	460	40
Steam frigate Mississippi	28	290	10
Steam frigate Powhatan	34	320	9
Sloop-of-war Germantown	18	200	20
Total	110	1,290	79

The above may be considered a correct estimate of the actual force we have in the East. In recapitulating the numbers of officers and men employed on each of the stations detailed, it may not be out of place to say that we have made an allowance for invalids, incapables, &c., and that the actual available material only is set down.

RECAPITULATION.

Stations.	Ships.	Officers.	Men.	Guns.
Brazil and Paraguay	13	290	2,700	137
Home, including vessels ordered to the Gulf	9	168	1,995	169
Pacific	6	128	1,621	122
Coast of Africa	4	71	980	102
Mediterranean	2	55	720	62
China	3	97	1,000	59
Total amount of ships, officers, men and guns in active service on squadrons	37	907	9,016	701

Although we have not included the chartered vessels of the Paraguay expedition, which, as yet, do not belong to the service, in this table, the officers, men and guns on board them are reckoned in it.

THE U. S. MARINE CORPS.

We have neither time nor space to speak of this gallant body of solders as it deserves; but we cannot help observing that the Government which it serves, and the naval officers, whose indispensable protectors the marines are, do not treat the Marine Corps as they should. The marine is the "ship's policeman," and when a mutiny breaks out "the guard" is the first thing called on; but when privileges are to be allowed, or favors conferred, the poor "sea soldier" is the last person thought of. There are about 80 officers and, at present, nearly 1,500 men attached to this branch of the service. Recently the Secretary of the Navy recommended Congress to pass a law to increase the corps by 1,000 men, half of which number has been added imperceptibly, since the "special order" was issued to enlist extra men for the Paraguay expedition.

THE STEAMER C. VANDERBILT.

We learn from Capt. Stone of the steamer Plymouth Rock that but slight hopes are entertained of saving the C. Vanderbilt. She went ashore on Tuesday morning, about 4 o'clock, during the snow storm. Capt. Frazee of the Vanderbilt passed the Plymouth Rock off Saybrook, about 1 o'clock a. m., and from that time until the disaster did not see any light or landmark whatever. He was feeling his way cautiously, expecting to make the light on the Dumplings, and must have made about two miles leeway to get ashore. His soundings a few seconds before the steamer struck were thirty fathoms, then nine, and then six, when she grounded forward, and the sea swept her around, broadside into the breakers. She brought up inside of the reef, in six feet of water, within a few fathoms of the shore, where she remained at last advices, the tide ebbing and flowing in her, at high water half filling her cabin.

It was ascertained that she had stranded about 300 feet from the S. W. Point of Fisher's Island. There is a long reef of rocks running out from the point, below where the steamer lies. Had she struck upon that, there would no doubt have been a serious loss of life, as she must have broken up in a short time in the storm that prevailed. It is fortunate, therefore, that this danger was escaped.

The passengers and crew, numbering 125 persons, remained on board all night, in safety, although somewhat alarmed, and landed on the island the next morning. In the afternoon they were taken to the main land in fishing smacks and proceeded to Boston. Mr. Howard, the baggage-master, went on with the baggage and valuable express freight. From the position of the C. Vanderbilt, she is exposed to storm from every direction save the north-east. Capt. Stone went to her on Wednesday, but could do no good. He sent a force of thirty men, however, to assist in unloading her, and it was thought that her freight, valued at $100,000, would all be landed yesterday.

The Plymouth Rock, on her down trip, yesterday morning, when off Lloyd's Neck, broke the arm of her eccentric, and came along slowly, working the disabled part by hand. The steamer Empire State coming up soon after, took the crippled boat in tow. The damage to the Plymouth Rock was repaired yesterday. She left in the afternoon at her usual hour.

A NEW STEAMSHIP.

The Pacific Mail Steamship Company are about to contract for a first-class steamship for the Panama and San Francisco route. The work is to be begun immediately.

NAVAL.

The United States storeship Relief, Lieut.-Commanding James H. Strong, from Aspinwall Dec. 7, arrived at this port yesterday. The following is a list of her officers: James H. Strong, Lieut.-Commanding; James S. Thornton, Wm. W. Low, Lieutenants; B. Rush Mitchell, Surgeon; James B. Morrison, jr., Captain's Clerk. Dec. 21, off Havana, at sea, J. Howard March, Lieutenant, died.

FOR CALIFORNIA.

The steamship Illinois took out 400 passengers to California, and the United States mails, yesterday.

FORTY-TWO WIVES OF WHALING CAPTAINS IN THE PACIFIC.

A few years ago it was exceedingly rare for a whaling captain to be accompanied by his wife and children; but it is now very common. An examination of the list of whalers shows that no less than forty-two are now in the Pacific. Just one-half that number are now in Honolulu. The happy influence of this goodly number of ladies is apparent to the most careless observer. We hope to witness in years to come a still larger representation. Formerly, ship-owners in New-Bedford were bitterly opposed to their masters bringing their families with them. The reason of course was, that they feared their ships would not as speedily fill up. We believe the reverse might be shown from actual statistics. As the ships have not all arrived, it is too soon to present facts. At any rate, there are nine ships now lying in our harbor, with the captain's wives as passengers, and the average of these ships is over 750; while *The Commercial* gives only 575 as the average catch for the season, so far as ships are reported.

PERSONNEL AND PLANS OF THE AGRICULTURAL CONGRESS.

From The Washington States, of Jan. 4.

In another column of this paper we insert the introductory proceedings of the Agricultural Congress which the Secretary of the Interior has assumed the prerogative of convening at the Federal Capital. We had intended to furnish our own report of this august assemblage, but its deliberations are conducted in secrecy. The motive of such an arrangement is not intelligible, except upon the hypothesis that it is designed to screen the ignorance of members from the contemptuous criticism of the farmers of the country.

It will be observed by reference to the list of delegates, that it contains no name of conspicuous reputation in the agricultural community, unless the inevitable Wilder and the ubiquitous Poore are to be regarded as celebrities in that department of human achievement. Take Virginia for example: neither Ruffin, nor Cocke, nor Seddon, nor any other eminent agriculturist from that State, is present to redeem the Convention from ridicule. But Mr. W. W. Corcoran is there, in all the glory of conscious millions, and with that authoritative aspect which awes the vulgar multitude into reluctant admiration. If the problem were to devise the readiest expedient for depleting the public treasury by the exaction of usurious interest, we could imagine no more suggestive representative than Crœsus Corcoran. What possible light he may shed on the mysteries of Agricultural science, is more than we can conjecture, seeing that his only exploit in this province is the successful cultivation of grass on the numerous lots in the city which he has dressed out for speculative prices. However, according to the maxim of the King of Brobdignag, this service may be thought to entitle him to the gratitude of mankind.

What with Wilder's impartial presidency and Corcoran's luminous intellect, some people may anticipate splendid results of this Agricultural Congress. When we add the stimulus of five cents mileage and $25 for personal expenses, which the Secretary of the Interior generously allows out of the public treasury, we may expect the members to exert themselves with the most productive industry. Nor should we omit the contributions of the statistical Browne from our calculations—of Brown historically known as *D. Jay*—of Brown who, like another Xerxes, has exhausted empires in his travels, and has enriched this favored land with the accumulated treasures of his researches in "furrin parts"—of Brown who, after years of laborious apprenticeship in the subordinate position of clerk to a Department, cherishes the commendable ambition of creating a Bureau of Agriculture, and himself presiding over its operations—of Brown who, having distributed seed enough to nourish a forest of canaries, is at last impatient to reap the harvest of reward in his own personal promotion.

After all, however, we would be pleased if some one of the notabilities associated with Mr. D. Jay Browne in this laudable enterprise would indicate *the particular clause of the Constitution which authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to appropriate money from the public treasury in the shape of contributions to an Agricultural Congress?* Whence does he derive the power of creating any such anomalous body? It is a fungus on the political system. It is one of these unhealthy developments which betray a constitutional disorder.

SCENE IN A SCHOOL-ROOM.—*The Springfield Republican* is responsible for the following:

Come here, George, I wish to examine you in punctuation. What's that?

George—That? that's a comma.

Mistress—Right; now what's that?

George—Ah! now you've got me where my hair's short; I dun kno.

Mistress—George, I do not wish you to use any slang phrases here. When you are unable to give correct replies, say so, but do not repeat such phrases as that which you have just used. Now, what's that?

George—I dun kno.

Mistress—Don't know what that is? Why that's a period.

George—(Looking critically at the point in question.) Ha! ha! ha! Now I've got *you* where *your* hair's short; *that ain't nuthin' only a fly-dirt!*

Mistress—(Reëxamining critically.) George you are dismissed.

A RUNAWAY MARRIAGE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.—In Milton, Vt., a matrimonial affair has recently occasioned considerable excitement. Miss Sarah Jane Phillips, a miss of 14 years, with red hair and $1,200 in her own right, was "wooed and won" by E. W. Brown, a young man of the mature age of 19 years, a woodchopper, writing-master, and "oriental painter" by profession. The match was favored by both the parents of the girl, but as her father was under the control of a guardian, and the girl herself had a guardian, the consent of the parents did not amount to much. Under these circumstances the young couple eloped and were made one flesh. Mr. F. B. Hathaway, the young lady's guardian, hearing of the marriage, determined to take her into his own custody, which he succeeded in doing after a hard fight with old Mrs. Phillips, and placed her with a friend of his in the town of Georgia, to board and go to school. Upon hearing of this ruthless invasion of his conjugal rights, the newly-made husband got out a habeas corpus to obtain his wife. The hearing took place before Judge Bennett, at Burlington. The return to the writ was that Sarah Jane was of weak mind, and not of sufficient capacity to contract marriage. The testimony introduced to prove these allegations turned out to be weaker than the intellect of Miss Phillips was alleged to be, the Court deciding that the little lady must be restored to her husband, if she so desired, which she did, and the twain left the court-room as happy as all newly married pairs are supposed to be. It is announced that the bride has sued for a divorce, one of her aunts bringing a petition for that purpose. [*Boston Journal.*

Lieut. Doyle has been ordered to the Brooklyn. This is the first appointment from the naval officers recently restored to the active list.